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YELLOWSTONE PARK

By WILLIAM N. WEBSTER, E.E. 4

We had traveled for a whole week and now the scenery had changed beyond any comparison with the sights to be seen back home. Mountains seemed to be playing high-and-peek with us for the last two days. At times they appeared to be only a few miles away and we, being anxious to get in among them, would pull down on the gas lever, only to go another half day and find that they were still a few miles further on. We had unending faith in our model T Ford, for it had roamed the United States for the past ten years under the guidance of nearly that many different owners, so why should it quit now?

As the sun was going down behind a mountain, the old Ford swerved off the side of the road, jumped a small ditch, then followed a small stream at right angles to the road for perhaps fifty yards and came to a halt against a large boulder. We were several miles from anywhere. However, this was not an accident; we were making camp for the night.

As we were hungry, little time was lost in making preparations for supper. An onlooking mountaineer would have seen a man, bucket in hand, immediately head for the little stream, while the other member of the expedition pulled a small gas stove from the pile of rubbish which filled the rear compartment of the weather beaten old car and proceeded to transfer precious gasoline from the gasoline tank to the stove. At night the thin air at this altitude was quite chilly, even in the middle of the summer, so a fire was soon started; wood was stacked in a heap, Indian fashion, which kept our bodies warm on one side while the other side froze. The stove was lighted and water placed over one burner while the other burner was reserved for cooking our suppers.

The potatoes and eggs were soon pronounced to be ready to eat, and were accordingly divided into two army mess kits. We devoured our respective allotments in silence, sitting as near to the fire as safety and comfort would permit. The mess kits were washed—as we had been duly cautioned to do so after each meal by kind advisers before leaving home—and carefully disposed of again in the pile of rubbish that we might have the pleasure of throwing everything out to find them again.

As a part of the night's camp, the spot light was turned on, and a map selected from a stack of some fifteen or twenty others. This was then spread out over the hood of the car while we climbed to an advantageous point and began counting up the miles to be traveled before we should reach Gardiner Entrance. By the calculations of distances measured upon a twig broken to a 10-mile length, we figured there were some fifty miles between us and the park. The roads were very crooked so that distances were only very roughly estimated. We made plans to complete the remaining distance in the early hours of the following day so accordingly we spread our blankets, and placing a pistol beneath each pillow, were soon jolting along miles of mountain roads in peaceful slumber.



An Idle Moment en Route.

Early the next morning, after making a wild plunge at washing in the icy water of the little stream, and eating the regular "Little Crow" pancakes, we wound up the motor and set forth with high spirits, hoping to set a new record for model T's. In due time we arrived at the little mountain town of Gardiner, which is at the northern entrance to the Park from Montana. After the officials looked us over very carefully and placed seals on our weapons, we were granted admission and given orders to "move on."

We soon came to the Administration Building where by squeezing in between a Cadillac and a Pierce-Arrow, we managed to park. In the lawn of this building there was a miniature house built of elk antlers, deer antlers, moose horns, and buffalo skulls, bleached to a stony whiteness. We collected several more maps and went through the museum where specimens of animals in the park were mounted with natural backgrounds.

The Park has a circular system of roadways with five entrances. It is about 160 miles around the complete circuit. This distance we planned to cover in three days, going by the western route around to Lower Falls, then across Dunraven pass and out the South entrance. The entire time in the Park would take three days.

At the end of a laborous five-mile drive, we stopped at Mammoth Hot Springs. We stepped out and began climbing the steep incline to the formations. This was the first time we had attempted climbing at such an altitude (8000 feet) and found that we were soon exhausted. This condition, however, did not last long, for after the initial exhaustion we proceeded more slowly until no longer affected to any noticeable extent.

The carved and fretted terraces at Mammoth Hot Springs were a sight to hold the sightseer awestricken; hot water seeping from the top of a mountain, running in a thin film over the terraces carrying particles from the bowels of the earth and depositing them in countless forms and colorings on its way to the small stream below. All shades and tints of every imaginable color as well as reefs of crystal white shone from beneath the thin film of water. The pools of hot water, covering several acres on top, formed little banks

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YELLOWSTONE PARK

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around the edges of each pool which would break in places to allow the water to run off to another pool and eventually spill down over the side to deposit its contents on the terraces below when cooled by the mountain air. Many paths led around over the entire mass, one of which led to another part of the formations. Here was the great Liberty Cap, a natural rock some fifteen feet in height, six feet in diameter and rounded on top in the shape of a cap.

That night we made camp at Mammoth Tourists' Park. Here we met two young fellows who had attempted the mountain roads in an old Franklin car which they had remodeled to suit their needs. They had encountered some bad luck by burning out a couple of bearings on the steep grades in the Park. That evening was spent in friendly conversation with them by our camp fire as our camps were very near each other. After several hours spinning yarns, they left to prepare their beds for the night.

When all was quiet, a lady from one of the camps must have felt lonely for she began singing. In strict contrast to the death-like stillness of the pines and the great outdoors, her voice seemed strangely out of place. "Little Brown Jug" was chosen as her finale, and received a general applause from the entire camp.

The scenes and trappings of the day had prepared us for an early bed-time. Two slickers were spread upon a pile of pine needles to form the base for the bunks. The total blanket supply followed on top of the slickers and ended with the army pup tent, which was used as an extra blanket. We never pitched this tent except in times of apparent rain, but always spread it over the other blankets. In this way it served the twofold purpose of giving added warmth and protection against mist and dew. The fragrant pine needles and pitch added to the peacefulness of our slumber in the little thicket.

The following morning we passed through the Golden Gate, under the shadow of Bunsen Park, to Apollinaris Spring. While here we saw several brown bears and a pair of deer. The next stop was at the base of Roaring Mountain. True to the name, Roaring Mountain was ever rumbling far below the earth's surface. At times these sounds would almost die away, only to begin anew in greater volume than ever. Hot water seeped out to form a lake of hot, bubbling water in the midst of which stood many small pines. These had been caught in an early eruption and now stood lifeless in the midst of steaming springs. Their snowy whiteness, preserved by the sulphur content of the water, stood as a monument to their untimely death caused by the outcropping of the hot waters.

We next came to the Firehole District or the Norris Geyser Basin. This whole area was filled with steam coming from the boiling lakes and geysers. The air had the characteristic sulphur odor which is associated with the geysers. In places, supposedly where the nature of the lower strata prevented the forming of geysers, the hot steam would seep up through the mucky clays of many colors. These were the famous Paint Pots which were being eternally mixed by the seepage of steam upward.

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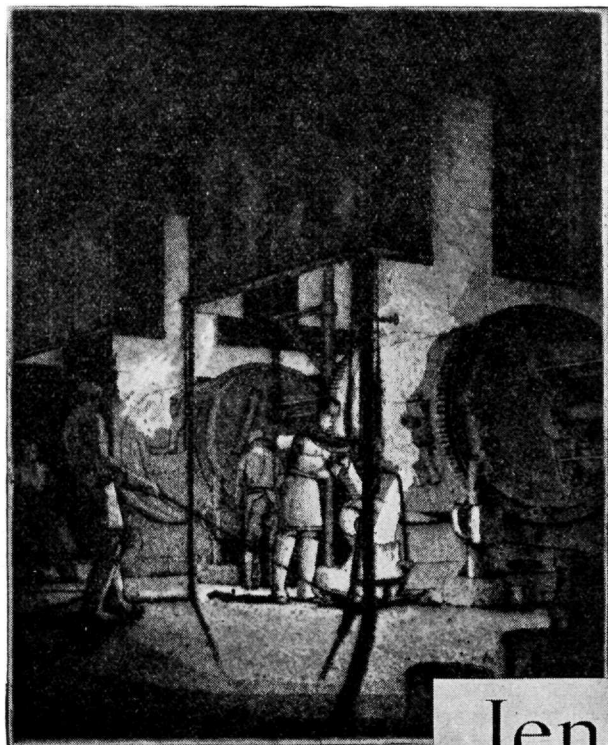


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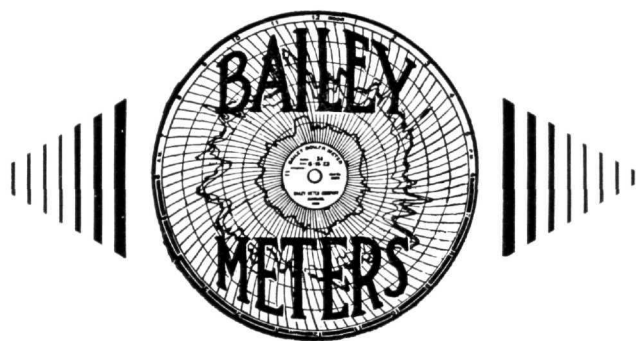
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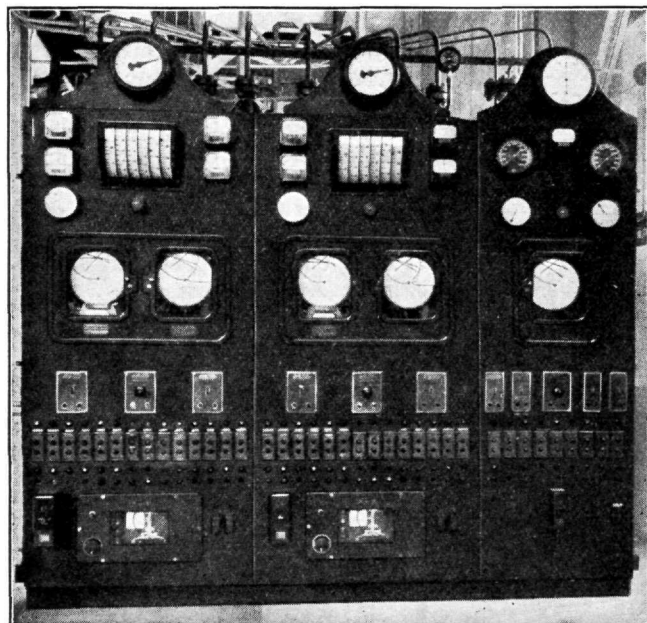
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YELLOWSTONE PARK

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Firehole Lake covers an area of several acres with boiling water. It is crystal clear and in places where steam does not cut off vision, it is fifteen or twenty feet deep. The water enters through holes in the bottom with such force that it causes small fountains to rise and boil through, the water bubbling above the surface of the lake. Here we washed our dishes and boiled some eggs without having to build a fire. There are more than forty geysers accessible in the three large basins on the west side. Some of them spout every few seconds, some every few minutes, others at intervals of hours or days, and a few at irregular intervals of weeks. The eruptions vary from several feet to two hundred and fifty feet. The whole region bubbles and hisses and steams. The most notable of the geysers is Old Faithful, playing every sixty minutes and The Giant which spouts for an hour at a time with an interval of six to fourteen days between eruptions and attains a height of two hundred and fifty feet.

Leaving the Upper Geyser Basin, we proceeded to Yellowstone Lake where we camped for the night. At the end of a fourteen-mile drive the following morning we came to Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Falls. Above the falls, the rushing river lies nearly level with the surrounding country while below the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone begins. The Yellowstone River comes rushing through the rapids and makes it last wild plunge to the floor of the canyon in gusts of spray and sheets of white water extending nearly twice as high as those of Niagara. From Inspiration Point, looking a thousand feet almost vertically down upon the foaming Yellowstone River, and southward three miles to the Great Falls, the observer sees spread before him the most glorious kaleidoscope of color he will ever see in nature. The steep slopes are inconceivably carved by frost and the erosion of the ages. Sometimes they lie in straight lines at easy angles, from which jut high rocky prominences. Sometimes they seem carved from the sidewalls. Here and there jagged rocky needles rise perpendicularly like groups of gothic spires.

The whole is colored as brokenly and vividly as the field of a kaleidoscope. The walls of the canyon are streaked and spotted in every shade from the deepest to the softest oranges to the faintest lemon, from deep crimson through all the brick shades to the softest pink, from black through all the grays and pearls to glistening white. The greens are furnished by the dark pines above, the lighter shades of growth caught here and there in soft masses on the gentler slopes and the foaming green on the river so far below. Eagles fly up and down among the rocky crags screaming and soaring. The Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Falls are far beyond words of description.

Leaving Grand Canyon, we proceeded to pass over Dunraven Pass so that we might camp at Camp Roosevelt. This was one of the most peaceful scenes that we have ever witnessed. The Pass led along the side of Mount Washburn at an elevation of 9000 feet. With this mighty range on one side and the vast valley several miles across and stretching an almost inconceivable distance below on the other, with the old Ford peacefully laboring along the little shelf half way up the side of

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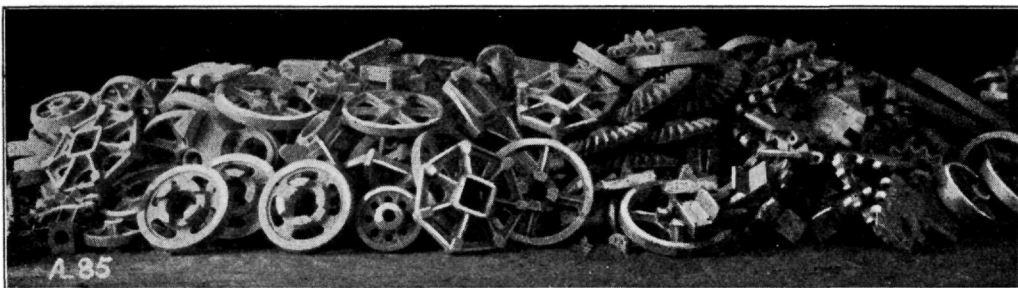
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Mount Washburn, the insignificance of a human being here in the heart of Nature's work was duly impressed upon us. The sun was just going down, casting shadows from the mountain range on the west, but shining in grand splendor upon the eastern slopes of mountain pine. In the protected inlets were patches of snow several feet deep. The quietness and vastness made an impression never to be forgotten. Darkness was falling as we coasted into Camp Roosevelt and made camp.

The next morning we were awakened by shouts from some campers a short distance from us. A large black bear had broken into their camp and now they were after him with tin cans. Bruin was lucky that the women in the party could not throw very straight and that the men were not much better. After a good breakfast of hotcakes, we started scraping carbon and grinding valves on the Ford car. By noon it was ready for the road again. We visited Lower Falls and the Petrified Trees, then started back over Dunraven Pass, through the South entrance and on to the Grand Tetons, the Jackson Hole country and Home.
